

Recidivism of the Institutional and Supervised Offender Population

June 30, 2023



Michael L. Parson, Governor

Trevor Foley, Acting Director

Published 12/19/2023

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1. Recidivism Measurement

Recidivism is the recording of negative events after an offender has been released from prison or has started supervision in the community. The standard measure is to record the first negative event and relate it to the time from release or start of supervision. For example, to calculate a three-year recidivism rate during this past state fiscal year (FY2023), you must examine individuals exiting prison or entering probation supervision during state fiscal year 2020. The events recorded in this report following a release from prison or start of supervision are:

1. The first incarceration for a violation of the supervision or a new prison sentence.
2. The first new prison sentence, which includes court ordered 120 day or long term drug sentences.
3. The first new sentence, either prison or probation. A new probation sentence would not result in an incarceration unless the probation was later revoked.

The different measures are recorded independently. For example, if an offender was first revoked for a technical violation of supervision, re-released and then commits a new offense and sentenced to prison, the first incarceration would be recorded under measure 1 and the second incarceration under measure 2. Although the three measures are calculated independently there is a time bias in calculating the new sentence rates. When offenders are on supervision they are more likely to be incarcerated for technical violations, which means they cannot commit new offenses until they are re-released. New sentence recidivism rates are, therefore, most useful after two or three years.

The data for the calculation of the recidivism rates are taken from the DOC offender database. The DOC incarcerates only for felonies and supervises offenders on probation for a limited number of misdemeanor offenses. New offenses will, therefore, only include felonies and those misdemeanors that the DOC supervises. In addition, offenses committed in other states will not be included in the analysis.

2. National comparison of recidivism rates

The latest statistics of recidivism published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics is an analysis of state prisoner release records from FY2012 by the National Corrections Reporting Program, which includes Missouri. The report showed that nearly half of all releasees (46.0%) had returned to prison within five years of release (i.e., by the end of FY2017). Missouri was slightly higher than when compared with the other 21 states reporting (47.6%), however, since FY2017 our recidivism rate has been declining. There are no national measurements of probation recidivism.

3. Institutional first releases

Institutional first releases are releases to parole, on conditional release or on completion of sentence. Excluded are the releases of parole violators who have been returned on the same sentence.

3.1 Recidivism over time

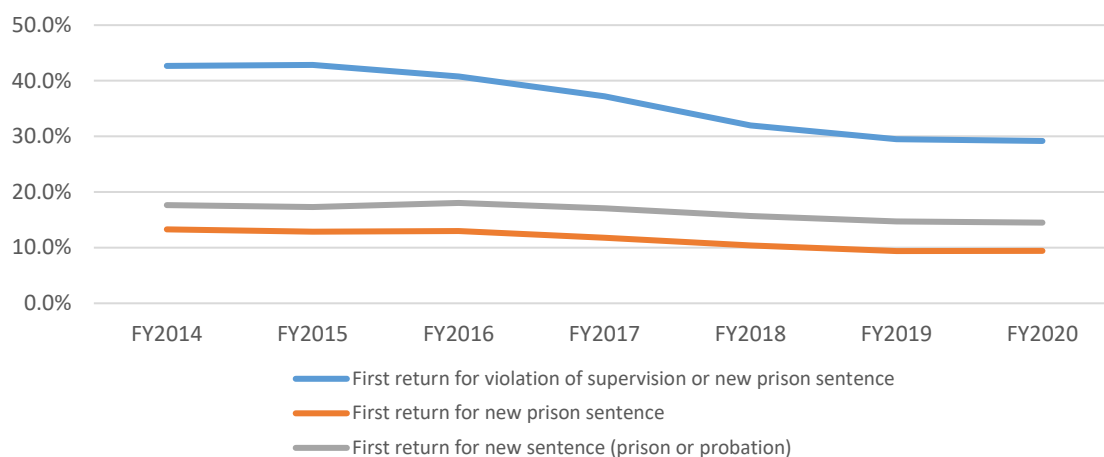
Recidivism is a cumulative measure which increases over time. For the first incarceration it increases from 6.8% after six months to 43.6% after five years. For new sentence recidivism the rates are low until two years from release and then both rates begin to increase. From FY2019 (i.e., those released in FY2016) there has been a sizable decrease in recidivism, although it now may be levelling off.

Table 1: Three Year Recidivism Rates: Prison Releases

Released	First Return	First Prison Sentence	First Sentence
FY2014	42.7%	13.3%	17.7%
FY2015	42.9%	12.9%	17.3%
FY2016	40.8%	13.0%	18.0%
FY2017	37.2%	11.8%	17.1%
FY2018	32.0%	10.4%	15.7%
FY2019	29.5%	9.4%	14.7%
FY2020	29.2%	9.4%	14.5%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>			
	-31.6%	-29.2%	-17.8%

After three years from release the percentage decrease in the first return recidivism is 31.6%, for the first new prison sentence it is 29.2% and for the new sentence it is 17.8%. The decrease is attributed to fewer field violations from more effective field supervision and which has led to fewer revocations.

Figure 1: Three Year Recidivism Rates: Prison Releases



3.3 Gender

Female offenders have lower recidivism than males and this applies to all three recidivism measures and is found consistently across all types of recidivism measurement. The percentage reduction in recidivism since FY2017 for the three recidivism measures in FY2023 is greater for females than for males (-43.4% compared to -29.6%, -37.6% compared to -28.6%, and -28.9% compared to 16.0%, respectively).

Table 2: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Gender: Prison Releases

Released	First return		First prison sentence		First sentence	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
FY2014	41.0%	42.9%	13.0%	13.5%	17.9%	17.6%
FY2015	40.3%	43.3%	11.8%	13.1%	17.3%	17.3%
FY2016	35.5%	41.7%	9.5%	13.6%	15.9%	18.4%
FY2017	34.3%	37.7%	7.9%	12.5%	12.9%	17.8%
FY2018	24.1%	33.4%	6.0%	11.2%	12.7%	16.3%
FY2019	21.8%	31.0%	5.9%	10.1%	11.0%	15.4%
FY2020	23.2%	30.2%	8.1%	9.6%	12.7%	14.8%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>						
	-43.4%	-29.6%	-37.6%	-28.6%	-28.9%	-16.0%

3.4 Offense Group

Nonviolent and drug offenders have the highest recidivism rates, with violent offenders third. DWI and sex and child abuse offenders have much lower recidivism rates. Still, compared to releasees in FY2014, releasees in FY2020 had three-year recidivism rates that were significantly lower than they were less than a decade ago in all crime categories.

Table 3: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Offense Group: Prison Releases

Released	Sex &				
	Drugs	DWI	Nonviolent	Child Abuse	Violent
FY2014	46.8%	20.9%	51.4%	23.7%	35.9%
FY2015	46.0%	20.9%	49.6%	26.6%	38.0%
FY2016	46.8%	22.5%	47.4%	23.0%	32.7%
FY2017	39.7%	15.2%	44.2%	20.5%	31.8%
FY2018	32.6%	14.4%	38.1%	17.8%	28.6%
FY2019	30.4%	14.5%	36.2%	17.3%	24.4%
FY2020	30.7%	11.1%	36.4%	13.0%	25.8%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>					
	-34.4%	-47.1%	-29.1%	-45.0%	-28.1%

There can be many reasons for the differences in recidivism by type of offense but four are notable: First, violent and sex offenders, because they generally serve long sentences, may be older on release and, therefore, less likely to recidivate. Second, DWI and sex offenders have higher specialization ratios, in that they are more likely to commit the same type of offense. Third, offenders serving drug and nonviolent offenses are generally released to serve the longest part of their sentence on supervision and therefore are subject to revocation for technical offenses for a longer period of time. Fourth, individuals convicted of DWI and Sex Offenses often have higher educational attainment and employment experience compared to individuals in other crime groups, both of these are commonly considered protective factors against future recidivism.

3.5 Felony class

The recidivism by felony class generally decreases as the severity of the offense increases. Class A felonies have the lowest recidivism (15.2% after three years for those exiting during FY2020). Class D and E felonies are largely nonviolent and drugs and have the highest recidivism rates (33.5% and 30.5%, respectively). Unclassified felonies are generally sex offenses that have sentencing restrictions that do not meet the felony class sentencing standards and their rates are lowest (7.1%). Class C felonies are a new felony class created by the 2014 revision to the criminal code and which became effective on January 2017. The most populous offense is drug distribution, which was a class B offense before the revision to the criminal code.

Table 4: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Offense Group: Prison Releases

Released	A	B	C *	D	E	Unclassified
FY2014	24.9%	37.7%		48.0%	40.0%	20.5%
FY2015	25.0%	39.0%		47.6%	41.4%	21.8%
FY2016	15.7%	36.2%		46.8%	39.4%	15.9%
FY2017	17.9%	30.4%		42.3%	36.6%	16.2%
FY2018	17.1%	26.8%	18.8%	36.0%	30.4%	17.7%
FY2019	14.0%	25.6%	27.9%	33.0%	28.7%	14.9%
FY2020	15.2%	23.6%	26.5%	33.5%	30.5%	7.1%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>						
	-39.0%	-37.5%	41.1%	-30.3%	-23.9%	-65.1%

* Felony class as created by the revision to the criminal code effective 2017, 558.011 RSMo

4. Recidivism rates of offenders serving probation sentences

Recidivism rates in this section refer to offenders sentenced to a new probation and offenders sentenced by the courts to a 120-day or long-term drug program and released to probation.

4.1 Recidivism over time

For first incarceration recidivism increases from 4.4% after six months to 32.5% after five years. For new sentence recidivism the rates are low until two years from the start of supervision and then begin to increase to 12.5% after five years for new prison sentences and 22.2% for all new sentences. The recidivism rates are lower than for first releases from prison.

The recidivism rates for offenders released from 120-day and long term drug programs are higher than new probation recidivism. Initially they are low but after two years the rates are similar to those of first releases and continue to increase as first releases.

As with first releases, there has also been similar decreases in recidivism in probation openings in the last ten years and most notably from FY2019 (i.e. those released in FY2016). The recidivism for first incarceration has been reduced by 25.9%. There has been a smaller decrease in the recidivism of 120-day and long term drug releases (-17.1%).

Table 5: Three Year Recidivism Rates: Probation Sentences

Released	New Probation			120-day/Long term drug		
	First Incarceration	First		First Incarceration	First	
		Prison Sentence	Sentence		Prison Sentence	Sentence
FY2014	28.6%	9.0%	15.0%	35.2%	14.1%	17.5%
FY2015	29.6%	9.5%	16.0%	39.6%	14.7%	18.8%
FY2016	30.2%	9.9%	16.4%	41.8%	16.9%	21.6%
FY2017	28.9%	9.1%	15.5%	37.2%	14.5%	19.3%
FY2018	24.9%	8.0%	14.3%	33.8%	13.9%	18.6%
FY2019	21.8%	7.3%	13.3%	32.2%	13.5%	18.8%
FY2020	21.2%	7.6%	13.8%	29.2%	12.6%	18.3%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>						
	-25.9%	-15.1%	-8.2%	-17.1%	-10.3%	4.7%

4.2 Gender

Female offenders have lower recidivism than males and this applies to all three recidivism measures. The percentage reduction in recidivism since FY2017 for the three recidivism measures in FY2023 is greater for females than for males (-32.1% compared to -23.6%, -22.2% compared to -12.7%, and -8.6% compared to -7.7%, respectively).

Table 6: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Gender: Probation Sentences

Released	First incarceration		First-prison sentence		First sentence	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
FY2014	27.2%	29.2%	6.5%	9.9%	12.8%	15.9%
FY2015	27.3%	30.4%	6.5%	10.7%	13.6%	16.9%
FY2016	27.3%	31.3%	6.7%	11.2%	13.6%	17.5%
FY2017	27.4%	29.5%	6.8%	10.0%	13.0%	16.6%
FY2018	22.9%	25.7%	5.3%	9.1%	11.6%	15.5%
FY2019	19.6%	22.8%	4.8%	8.3%	11.0%	14.3%
FY2020	18.4%	22.3%	5.1%	8.6%	11.7%	14.6%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>						
	-32.1%	-23.6%	-22.2%	-12.7%	-8.6%	-7.7%

This pattern has not held for individuals exiting 120-day or long-term drug treatment programs. While the three-year recidivism rate of males exiting these programs during FY2020 has declined across all three measures, females entering supervision from a court-ordered treatment program during FY2020 saw increases for first prison sentence recidivism (+12.7%) and first sentence recidivism (+47.4%) three-years on from exit.

Table 7: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Gender: Treatment Exits

Released	First incarceration		First-prison sentence		First sentence	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
FY2014	29.9%	36.3%	8.4%	15.2%	12.0%	18.6%
FY2015	36.5%	40.3%	11.8%	15.3%	16.4%	19.3%
FY2016	43.1%	41.5%	15.0%	17.3%	19.4%	22.0%
FY2017	32.7%	38.2%	9.7%	15.6%	14.5%	20.4%
FY2018	29.9%	34.7%	8.6%	15.3%	14.4%	19.7%
FY2019	29.4%	32.8%	9.3%	14.3%	13.7%	19.8%
FY2020	28.3%	29.4%	9.4%	13.2%	17.6%	18.5%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>						
	-5.3%	-19.0%	12.7%	-13.1%	47.4%	-0.6%

4.5 Offense Group

Unlike first releases from prison, probationers with violent offenses have recidivism rates similar to those of drug and nonviolent offenders and the recidivism rates of sex and child abuse offenders are also higher than for first releases. The higher recidivism is likely because of a higher rate of technical revocations compared to parolees with these offenses.

Table 8: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Offense Group: Probation Sentences

	Drugs	DWI	Nonviolent	Sex & Child	Violent
				Abuse	
FY2014	29.0%	14.5%	30.6%	24.3%	31.8%
FY2015	30.5%	14.3%	31.5%	21.9%	31.5%
FY2016	32.2%	13.3%	30.9%	26.0%	32.9%
FY2017	29.2%	12.7%	31.4%	19.5%	30.0%
FY2018	26.0%	9.9%	26.5%	18.5%	26.2%
FY2019	22.0%	9.7%	24.1%	13.9%	23.1%
FY2020	22.2%	9.0%	23.4%	13.9%	21.1%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>					
	-23.4%	-38.1%	-23.6%	-42.8%	-33.6%

Individuals exiting 120-day or long-term drug treatment programs have higher rates of recidivism within offense groups. They have also generally seen less impressive declines in rates over the period of review. This is particularly true for individuals exiting a treatment program with a conviction for DWI, Non-violent, or Sex offenses. These differences may be driven, in part, by the serious nature of their substance use disorder, which is commonly considered one of many risk factors for recidivism.

Table 9: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Offense Group: Treatment Exits

	Drugs	DWI	Nonviolent	Sex & Child Abuse	Violent
FY2014	37.4%	17.8%	43.7%	24.3%	37.0%
FY2015	41.6%	16.7%	52.0%	31.9%	37.3%
FY2016	46.6%	15.7%	52.1%	27.1%	41.4%
FY2017	40.2%	15.4%	48.3%	17.8%	35.4%
FY2018	38.2%	14.6%	40.5%	15.4%	30.6%
FY2019	33.7%	18.7%	40.9%	24.1%	26.5%
FY2020	30.3%	17.0%	40.3%	18.6%	21.4%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>					
	-19.1%	-4.7%	-7.8%	-23.5%	-42.0%

4.6 Felony class

As with Offense Group, unlike the recidivism of first releases from prison the recidivism rates of class A felonies with probation sentences are similar to the lower severity classes. Many class A felonies are violent offenses but probationers serving violent offenses have higher rates of technical revocations than parolees serving violent offenses. Nevertheless, there has been a 59.0% reduction in the recidivism rates of class A felony probationers in the last 10 years.

Table 10: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Felony Class: Probation Sentences

	A	B	C	D	E
FY2014	39.3%	23.7%		31.1%	23.3%
FY2015	32.4%	23.8%		31.8%	24.9%
FY2016	29.4%	27.9%		32.1%	25.1%
FY2017	27.0%	24.6%	27.7%	30.7%	24.2%
FY2018	24.3%	20.6%	19.6%	26.4%	22.4%
FY2019	19.2%	16.9%	16.7%	23.1%	19.9%
FY2020	16.1%	17.7%	14.6%	22.8%	19.5%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>					
	-59.0%	-25.1%	-47.4%	-26.6%	-16.1%

* Felony class as created by the revision to the criminal code effective 2017, 558.011 RSMo

Differences in recidivism rates by felony class between straight probation sentences and individuals exiting a court-ordered treatment program to probation are less stark when compared to offense groups. At the two highest felony levels (A and B) the recidivism rates are similar between these two groups of probationers. However, at the lower felony classes (C, D, and E) recidivism rates for FY2023 (i.e., those exiting in FY2020) are approximately 8 to 10 points higher for individuals exiting a treatment program to probation.

Table 11: Three Year Recidivism Rates by Felony Class: Treatment Exits

	A	B	C	D	E
FY2014	29.4%	30.9%		38.8%	28.0%
FY2015	40.0%	33.2%		42.1%	39.7%
FY2016	28.0%	39.7%		44.8%	33.0%
FY2017	36.0%	33.7%		38.5%	38.1%
FY2018	29.6%	24.7%	42.3%	35.8%	34.7%
FY2019	15.6%	22.4%	26.2%	35.8%	33.5%
FY2020	14.8%	20.7%	22.2%	32.8%	26.9%
<i>Percent change from FY2014</i>					
	-49.6%	-33.0%	-47.5%	-15.6%	-3.7%

* Felony class as created by the revision to the criminal code effective 2017, 558.011 RSMo

5. Summary

Recidivism is a common corrections outcome metric measured throughout jurisdictions. While there is significant variation in how the metric is constructed and the time-frame over which the outcome is measured, common measures of returns to incarceration, new convictions with a return to prison, and new convictions are found throughout the industry. In this report, we focus on three-year outcomes for individuals exiting prison or entering (primarily) felony probation. Utilizing administrative data for individuals who were at risk for recidivism starting 07/01/2013 through 06/30/2020 (state fiscal years 2014 – 2020), we found a 31.6% decrease in returns to prison between individuals exiting during FY2014 and those exiting in FY2020 (from 42.7% to 29.2%, respectively). For individuals starting probation during this same time period, we found a similar decrease of 26% (28.6% and 21.2%, respectively). Though there are many factors that are likely to impact the recidivism rates within a specific jurisdiction, we attribute much of this change to a decrease in field violations resulting in revocations for parolees and probationers alike.



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